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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3588  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3474  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5762  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3338  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4005  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3982  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001277

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MEDIA HIGHLIGHT SEPTEMBER POST EVENTS

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: During September, the Turkmen media provided generally accurate and positive coverage of Embassy activities. TV, print and radio outlets covered Embassy participation in the International Education Fair, the ceremony honoring the National Library with the award of an AFCP (Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation) grant, USAID activities and ran several other articles on US educational programs in Turkmenistan. END SUMMARY.

STATE MEDIA COVERAGE OF U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FAIR

¶2. (U) Both state "Yashlyk" TV channel (Turkmen) and state "Miras" TV channel carried accurate interviews with US Fulbright Scholar Dr. Melda Yildiz from the US booth at the International Education Fair. Her interview remarks at the exhibition were later repeated on state "Altyn Asyr" TV channel (Turkmen). The same day, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) carried a program dedicated to the exhibition, which prominently showed the U.S. Embassy booth and carried an accurate interview with USAID Country Director Ashley Moretz.

¶3. (SBU) On September 11, state weekly "Mugallymlar gazet-i" (Turkmen, circ. 93,591) posted an article carrying an interview with Public Affairs Officer William Stevens at the International Education Fair. The story was 90% filled with praising words about Turkmenistan, the Turkmen President's foreign policy and reforms in the country, which the PAO never made.

STATE TV NEWS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT US PARTICIPATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING FAIR

¶4. (U) On September 30, the "Watan" TV evening news program (Turkmen) carried a piece highlighting the U.S. booth at the publishing exhibition, and including an accurate interview with Dr. Yildiz. During the interview, Dr. Yildiz fully introduced the Embassy's print and digital publishing capabilities and used a digital map to highlight Trenton, New Jersey, recalling President Berdymuhamedov's recent visit there.

U.S. HELP TO TURKMENISTAN IN RESTORATION OF OLD BOOKS

15. (U) On September 23, pro-government website "Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English) referring to an Embassy-issued press release, posted an accurate article on the ceremony marking the award of a new AFCP grant to Turkmenistan's National Library for the conservation and restoration of rare books. The following day, state-run dailies "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 38,091) posted a similar story highlighting the event and emphasizing past conducted AFCP projects in Turkmenistan. The same day, "Targeted News Service" (English), and on September 26, Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian, English) posted the Embassy press release on the topic. On September 27, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) aired a separate program highlighting the event, following with accurate interview remarks by Charge d'Affaires and PAO, who stressed the role of AFCP in preserving Turkmenistan's cultural heritage. PAO introduced embassy's Public Affairs activities in culture, education exchanges and information. The program largely used press release material on the event.

#### STATE DAILY CARRIES ARTICLES ABOUT U.S. EMBASSY OFFICER, FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR AND FLEX PROGRAM

16. (U) On September 23, state-run daily "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) ran an accurate article on U.S. Embassy Economic Officer Kristine Marsh, who had spent her last month as Acting PAO. The article was based on an interview conducted by Viktoriya Nowikova, a Neytralniy Turkmenistan correspondent. The story highlighted Marsh's tenure in Turkmenistan, her main activities and site visits, used her quotes praising the country and stressing the importance of education exchanges between U.S. and Turkmenistan. The same story appeared on the government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen,

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Russian and English) on September 26.

17. (U) On September 25, "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) printed a short article on visiting US Fulbright scholar Melda Yildiz. The article described her active participation at the international scientific conference in Dashoguz and emphasized the various classes she offers for visitors at the Information Resource Center (IRC).

18. (U) Directly below the article about Dr. Yildiz the paper printed a long and favorable story about FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) program. The story mainly consisted of the interview remarks by program alumni, eagerly describing their U.S. high school and American family experiences. The story showed the alumni's appreciation for the program and their families and friends in the U.S. The article was an effective advertisement of the FLEX program among Turkmen youth. The story also appeared on the government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen, Russian and English) on September 26.

#### OPPOSITION WEBSITES EXPRESS CONCERN FOR AUCA STUDENTS IN TURKMENISTAN

19. (U) On September 3, the opposition website "Chronika Turkmenistan" (English, Russian) posted a story about the difficult situation faced by Turkmen students not allowed to leave the country for AUCA (American University in Central Asia in Bishkek). The story referred to an RFE/RL Turkmen Service correspondent's interview with U.S. Embassy spokesman William Stevens, and used his quotes, that the "US Embassy is working closely with the Government of Turkmenistan to resolve the issue."

110. (U) On September 5, "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" posted a story about the same matter based on an interview with U.S. Embassy spokesman William Stevens. The story was accurate, and it emphasized Stevens' confirmation about Turkmen students have been denied exit from Turkmenistan to travel to AUCA.

#### MEDIA HIGHLIGHT USAID ACTIVITIES IN TURKMENISTAN

111. (U) On September 15, state-run daily "Neytralniy Turkmenistan"

(Russian, circ. 49,091) carried an accurate article on a USAID-sponsored conference dedicated to the completion of project HOPE in Turkmenistan. The article outlined in brief the accomplishments of the project. On September 18, "Targeted News Service" (English) posted an Embassy-issued press release on USAID/Counterpart's completion of the Community Empowerment Program.

On September 29, "Targeted News Service" (English) posted another press release on USAID-sponsored roundtable with the Turkmen Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, to discuss legislation for NGOs. The following day, Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian, English) posted an article on the same event referring to post-issued press-release.

¶12. (U) COMMENT: September saw generally accurate and favorable media coverage of post conducted events. As noted in reftel, Berdimuhamedov's trip to New York brought on a shower of stories about the U.S. and U.S. programs in Turkmenistan. END COMMENT.

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